

**In the claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) An athletic training device for use in blocking balls, comprising:

a front layer intended to contact a hit ball;

a rear layer, which is intended to absorb force transmitted to said front layer;

an insert portion disposed between and secured to each of said front layer and said rear layer, said insert portion being comprised of a relatively stiff material; and

a hand receiving portion to allow receipt of a user's hand therein; said hand receiving portion being smaller than said front layer; said hand receiving portion covering a substantial portion of said user's hand to maintain it in a generally fixed position.

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Refer to Paragraph [21]

2. (Original) The training device of claim 1, wherein said training device is a volleyball blocking training device.

3. (Original) The training device of claim 2, wherein said insert portion is comprised of a plastic material.

4. (Original) The training device of claim 2, wherein said front layer and said rear layer are comprised of a foam material.

5. (Original) The training device of claim 4, wherein said rear foam layer is thicker than said front foam layer.

6. (Original) The training device of claim 2, wherein said insert portion is designed to provide some flexibility, but is stiff enough to prevent the ball from consistently passing over or through the training device.

7. (Original) The training device of claim 1, wherein said insert portion is glued to said front layer on one side and is glued to said rear layer on the other side.

8. (Original) The training device of claim 4, further comprising:  
 a covering surrounding said front foam layer, said insert portion, and said rear foam layer.

9. (Original) The training device of claim 8, wherein said covering is comprised of a fabric material.

10. (Original) The training device of claim 1, wherein said hand receiving portion is configured in the shape of a glove.

11. (Currently Amended) A volleyball blocking pad, comprising:  
 a foam portion;  
 a relatively stiff portion disposed in said foam portion;  
 an outer covering encapsulating said foam portion; and  
 a hand receiving portion secured to said outer covering; said hand receiving portion being smaller than said foam portion;  
whereby said foam portion and said relatively stiff portion can flex when contacted by a ball.

12. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said foam portion is comprised of a front foam portion and a rear foam portion.

13. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 12, wherein said relatively stiff portion is disposed between said front foam portion and said rear foam portion.

14. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 12, wherein said front foam portion is thinner than said rear foam portion.

15. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said relatively stiff portion is comprised of a plastic material that also provides some flexibility.

16. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said outer covering is removable.

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17. (Original) The blocking pad of claim 11, wherein said hand receiving portion is configured in the shape of a glove.

18. (Currently Amended) A volleyball blocking pad, comprising:  
an absorbing portion for absorbing some force of a contacting volleyball;

a relatively stiff portion in communication with said absorbing portion to allow said blocking pad to block said contacting ball, but still flex slightly backward with respect to a user's hand;

a hand portion in communication therewith for receipt of a said user's hand therein.

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